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<Book Reviews>Vina A. Lanzona. Amazons of the Huk Rebellion: Gender, Sex and Revolution in the Philippines. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009, 392p.

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nesian revolutionary forces). Perhaps the more catch-all category “intelligentsia” would have been more accurate than “intellectuals.” In any case, the interviewees, in sharing schooling in the Dutch language, certainly constituted an “elite” within Indies society, no matter how humble their individual circumstances may actually have been (some interviewees, for instance, speak of only wearing shoes to the classroom).

Mrázek organizes his inquiry into a tour of five architectural loci: bypasses and flyovers; walls; fences; classrooms; and windows. Like the individual Chinese logographs around which Jonathan Spence builds his chapters in *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, these loci give Mrázek the opportunity to talk about much more than the loci themselves. He begins with the freeways that tower over contemporary Jakarta, linking office buildings, hotels, and megamalls into a web of ultra-modern spaces floating above a sea of *kampung*, traditional neighborhoods. Similarly, colonial modernity created quarantined spaces, sealed off from the “native” (might we not view the post-colonial as, not the rejection, but the fulfillment of the colonial?). The author then moves on to “the Walls,” actually not just to the walls in themselves but to the intimate and not-so-intimate spaces that they enclosed. In the former category were the “pre-modern” washrooms where one scooped water out of tanks to bathe. In the latter category were the “salons,” the rooms for receiving guests where the family’s modernity was on display (including the very modern mini-museums of native antiques and “exotica”). The following chapter, “The Fences” is really more about the modern asphalt roads on which the interviewees sped from their houses to their schools, passing fence after fence, “overwhelmed by the newness of the modern urban and the metropolitan,” “growing accustomed” (as Mrázek quotes George Simmel putting it), “to continual abstractions, to indifference towards that which is spatially closest and to an intimate relationship to that which is spatially far removed.”

The other pole of the interviewees’ childhood existences was the classroom, the destination of their

daily commutes and the window on, and doorway to, their destiny, as individuals and as post-colonial Indonesians. The schools, despite themselves in all but the expressly nationalist Taman Siswa and similar institutions, instilled discipline. This the interviewees actually remember with warm gratitude — a discipline that was so different from what one interviewee, Mr. Hardjonegoro, describes as Javanese “dreaming” or overindulgence in “feeling,” a discipline that was “like learning to fly,” as another, former Air Marshal Omar Dhani (imprisoned after the 1965 counter-coup) portrayed it. It was the colonial school that taught what “freedom” was and produced the leaders that would teach the nation how to be free, proclaiming the lesson like teachers standing at the blackboard.

The tour culminates in a reflection on the Window, actually more on paintings as windows and on painting-making and painting-viewing as the calling into being of new realities (a quintessentially colonial act), whether we are considering the colonial idylls of the “*mooie Indië*” genre or the stirring propaganda posters of the Japanese period. Considering windows, Mrázek asserts as elsewhere that “colonies seemed to have been modern before the modern West truly happened.” This is one of the most exciting theses in his whole book and yet to prove it he would have had to resort to argumentation more grounded in precise chronology than his lyrical, evocative technique provides. What Mrázek does succeed in conveying through a flood of fragments of conversations is the very “feel” of what it was like to “become modern.”

(Andrew J. Abalakin · San Diego State University)

Vina A. Lanzona. *Amazons of the Huk Rebellion: Gender, Sex and Revolution in the Philippines*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009, 392p.

Vina Lanzona readjusts the historian’s lens when viewing the rebellion by the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (Communist Party of the Philippines, PKP) in the early

1950s by arguing for the critical role of women inside the organization. Through the extensive interviews she did of surviving PKP women cadres, she paints a revolutionary organization whose survival depended at a lot of times to the painstaking involvement and contribution of these women. For the first time therefore we have stories of women revolutionaries' experiences as told to an admiring academic. These are significant tales not only because they broaden our understanding of the communist movement, but also — and perhaps more importantly — since they probably are what we will be left with. The destruction of massive amounts of captured communist documents in a fire that destroyed a building in one of the military camps in Manila sometime in the 1960s means that henceforth the piecing together of more fragments of the PKP's postwar histories will have to rely on oral testimonies. Lanzona has done us a fantastic service in preserving these women-revolutionaries' recollections and for letting them speak all over her book.

Yet, while the PKP showed its distinctiveness and ascendancy over other political organizations in the Philippines by actively involving women in its projects, it still could not escape being sexist. Most of them worked as mail couriers, secretaries to top leaders, and finance officers in Party cells and units of the PKP's guerrilla army, the Hukbong Bayan (People's Army, or Huks), but there were a few also who became political officers of armed units, and those who rose up to the top leaderships of the Huks and the Party. The latter remained pretty much under male control and men continue to be "promoted as commanders while women served in support units and remained subordinate to men." Women "were [also] effectively excluded from combat duty and discouraged from engaging in direct military action" (p. 160).

So biased were the Huks against women assigned heavier burdens that the only way Celia Mariano could get a promotion was "to assert herself and demand that the party recognize her capacity for leadership" (p. 170). But how many other Celia Marianos were granted that privilege? Mariano was most likely exempted because

of her tertiary education. She also admitted she preferred talking politics with the men rather than the women. Here we notice the seeds of an embryonic elitism within the party of the proletariat which infected communist parties once they assume power.

And when other women did show signs of becoming more like Mariano, you get the sense that they were being kept within bounds by their male comrades for fear they might run out of control. Kumander Dayang-Dayang's alleged malfeasance was promptly dealt with for she was a comrade who appeared to have done so (we never really got to hear her side of the story). She was shot (Lanzona notes that Dayang-Dayang was portrayed in masculine terms by her male comrades such that when they decided her fate, her "masculine persona and her male acts warranted a masculine punishment: the firing squad" (p. 173)).

If the politico-military relationships between male and female revolutionaries were already that complicated, how about their personal ties? Chapter 4 of Lanzona's book is probably the most intriguing because it discusses the way in which communists had tried to deal with an internal problem that had (and continues to) bedeviled communist organizations and undermined their cohesion: love and sex.

V.I. Lenin, once snidely castigated Inessa Armand that sexuality "was not a Marxist subject" and that concepts like "free love" were nothing but "a bourgeois concept." To allow free love was to open cadres to "promiscuity and adultery." The venerated idol of many a communists argued that the "only logical and objective solution to the question of 'free love', based on strictly Marxist class principles was civilian marriage — with love — entered into by true proletarians devoted to a shared cause." Of course Lenin was the first to violate this norm by making a mistress out of Inessa (to the silent consternation of his wife Nadya).

The PKP agreed with its Great Leader's position, with Huk leader Luis Taruc playing down the "emotional content" (p. 189) and describing intimate relations inside the organization in masculine terms. PKP men were also the predators and women cadres often agreed

to become their lovers “because he was my comrade [and] we had a cause bigger than ourselves” (p.202). Of course, radical Valentinos like PKP leading cadre Casto Alejandrino took advantage of this attitude with braggadocio, nurturing relationships with four Huk women — including possibly a minor — apart from his wife (Politburo chief Jesus Lava and secretary-general Felicísimo Macapagal had three!!).

But the PKP also added its own unique panache to the issue of love and sexuality. To deal with pervasive “sexual opportunism” the Party “drafted a remarkable document titled ‘The Revolutionary Solution of the Sex Problem’” (p.215), which allowed, among other things, men to keep a “forest wife” to keep them company if “he can convince the leading committee . . . to which he belongs that either his health or his work are being adversely affected by absence from his wife.” Taking a forest wife is also allowed if the cadre inform his “low-land” wife and give her “the freedom to enter into a similar relationship in the barrio or the city, if she, too, finds herself unable to withstand the frustration” (p.217).

There were criticisms against this arrangement, but with the top cadres leading the way in acquiring “forest wives” and not being reprimanded for it, these complaints never gained traction.

These women accepted their fate, with one poignantly absolving Alejandro for he “was really married to the revolution” (p.203). Another woman cadre, Linda Ayala, explained to her critics why she married Jesus Lava this way: “Do not think that I chose him because he was a top leader. That is not true. *I do not love him, but for the sake of the movement, I am willing to be with him.* We will not find anyone who will be as intelligent as him; we cannot replace him anymore. So I am giving myself to him.” She added: “Since we got married, my major assignment was to safeguard him” (p.204, italics mine).

Lanzona is scathing in her critique of this revolutionary machismo and she is definitely into something when she argues that these “extramarital relationships compromised the growth and solidarity of the move-

ment.” This thread — exploring the link between gender bias and revolutionary collapse — is something worth studying in the future.

Except for some minor complaints (I have issues with Lanzona’s use of certain scholars she cites as authorities on the gender relationships inside the revolution), *Amazons of the Huk Rebellion* is a path-breaking work. It is a worthy addition to the already growing literature on the centrality of women in Southeast Asian history and politics.

(Patricio Nuñez Abinales · CSEAS)

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Sylva Frisk. *Submitting to God: Women and Islam in Urban Malaysia*. Denmark: NIAS Press, 2009, xvii + 216p.

Since the late 1970s, the *dakwah* (reform, revivalist) movement and later the government, tried to elevate the status and practice of Islam in Malaysia. Although commencing from a different departure point, the state Islamisation project and the revivalist embraced a similar platform to produce a non-western modernity of Malaysia. The general picture of Malaysian Islamisation and modernization shows strong male domination, while women are controlled and placed into domestic roles. However, beyond this general picture lie possibilities that Malay women in the Islamisation period experienced individual transformation in the sense that “they produce, recreate, and transform Islamic discourse and practice” (p.5). In this context this book, resulting from a dissertation project during nearly a year of anthropological work involving individual women and religious studies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 1995 to 1996 followed by subsequent research until 2009, shows interesting grounds for presenting intimate portrayals of Malay women’s agency in Malaysia Islamisation.